

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo October 2, 2009

From the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
(RIDE):

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- Directory information, sample forms for parents and for students
- Textbook reimbursement form

From RIDE:

Note from Commissioner Gist

Welcome to our 2nd Commissioner's Field Memo to superintendents. The response I've heard from you regarding the last week's memo has been very positive. I hope that this weekly memo improves communication between RIDE and your offices. This memo is still a work in progress, so we're open to any suggestions that you might have to improve this communication.

I have visited many of your districts since the start of the school year, and I am very much looking forward to visiting all districts and spending some time with each of you. These visits have been very helpful to me and also quite inspiring, as I get a chance to see first-hand some of the excellent work that is ongoing in many districts. Thanks for welcoming me into your schools!

Directory Information, Access to Military Recruiting Information, and Parental Consent – Response Required

This notice is to remind you of the need to notify parents annually regarding directory information and the release of directory information to military recruiters and to institutions of higher education. Please note that I will need to receive from all districts copies of your forms for distribution to parents and to students regarding directory information.

As you know, schools may release information contained in a student's education records without parental consent when the information is designated as "directory information." Directory information may include, but is not limited to: student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, dates of attendance, participation in officially recognized sports and activities, height and weight (for athletic teams), awards received.

Schools may release this directory information if they have notified parents of the types of personally identified information that the school considers to be directory information. Notifying them in a student handbook or in a letter constitutes notice.

Parents may ask that you not disclose any or all of this directory information, however. Therefore, you must provide parents with a form that allows them to do so. The form must list the types of information that you consider to be directory information. The form must also have a reasonable deadline for submission. I have attached to this field memo a sample form that parents may use to ask that schools not release all or some of the directory information.

In addition, there are specific provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 regarding the release of directory information to military recruiters and institutions of higher education. Schools are to release the names, addresses, and telephone listings to

military recruiters and institutions of higher education. (Sec. 9528) The law states, however, that secondary-school students and parents may request that names, addresses, and telephone listings not be released to military recruiters or institutions of higher education without prior written parental consent.

You will therefore need to:

- Include on the form for parents on directory information an opportunity for parents to request that the name, address, and telephone listing of their child not be distributed to military recruiters or institutions of higher education without prior written consent. (I have included this notice on the attached sample form.)
- Distribute a form to all secondary-students (middle school and high school), giving them the opportunity to request that their name, address, and telephone listing not be distributed to military recruiters or institutions of higher education without prior written consent of their parents. (I have also attached a sample form for students.)

These forms and notices must be distributed annually. You must find a means of effectively notifying parents in their primary or home language.

Once you have prepared forms for distribution to parents and students, please fax copies to Karen Lovett, of the Office for Diverse Learners, at 222-6030. Please do so by November 16th, 2009.

504 Coordinators Information Needed – Response Required

The Office for Diverse Learners at RIDE needs information regarding your district 504 coordinators.

Please provide to Karen Lovett (karen.lovett@ride.ri.gov, or 222-8333) the name or names of your district's 504 coordinator(s) as well as his or her contact information (phone and e-mail address)

If your district has school-based coordinators, we will need contact information for those coordinators as well.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Reimbursements for Nonpublic-School Textbooks – Response Required

Attached is the form to request the FY 2010 reimbursement for nonpublic school textbooks, grades K-12 in the subject areas of English-language arts and history or social studies. Districts will be reimbursed for any English-language arts and history or social studies books for grades K - 12 appearing on the approved 2009-10 Textbook List, provided that you have complied with all requests from nonpublic-school students (RIGL 16-23-1 to 16-23-8). To process this reimbursement, districts must complete the attached verification form signed by the superintendent or his or her designee, provide "evidence of cost" (RIGL 16-23-3-1), and return the information by mail or fax. Evidence of cost is presumed to be clear documentation of district purchases of new books for nonpublic-school students. Documentation needs

to show the year of purchase, the ID of the books and the cost, and the school for which the books were purchased.

You must submit the verification form to RIDE by **December 16, 2009**, in order for us to process your reimbursement voucher. By March 1, 2010, we will make a single FY 2010 payment, based upon the voucher submissions. If you have any questions regarding the textbook list or your eligibility for reimbursement, please contact Becky Wright, of the RIDE Office of Middle and High School Reform, at 222-8404. Please address questions regarding reimbursements to Kristen Cole, of the Office of Finance, at 222-4681.

The attached form should be sent to:

Becky Wright
Office of Middle and High School Reform
Rhode Island Department of Education
255 Westminster St.
Providence 02903-3400

Reminder on the high importance of ARRA reporting: Districts must submit accurate, timely reports

As all of us at RIDE and in your offices work hard to ensure that we get federal ARRA funds to you in a timely manner and that you use the funds to improve teaching and learning, it is *highly important* that all districts submit to RIDE accurate and timely reports on the use of ARRA funds.

School districts business managers received a letter earlier in the week regarding information on ARRA reporting. Because of the

unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability associated with the ARRA funds, I want to remind you that LEAs must maintain accurate, complete, and reliable documentation of all ARRA expenditures and must comply with all reporting requirements in a timely fashion.

The federal government has been reviewing the state's oversight and audit functions as they apply to awarded ARRA funds. We expect that federal officials will visit the state and school districts in the coming year to continue these reviews. It is critical that you perform due diligence as you use these ARRA funds for your programs.

In first round of ARRA, "1512" and "Jobs" reporting will be the key indicators to show how we are administering ARRA funds. Federal officials will scrutinize both the number of districts reporting and the quality of the reports.

The ARRA "1512" reporting is due October 10th and the "Jobs" reporting was due this week. Please be sure that your reports are accurate and submitted by the deadlines. It is imperative that each district fully participate in the reporting process. The accountability for these funds is not just at the state level but also at the local level, and all of our reporting must be of the highest quality.

The quality and timeliness of the ARRA reporting will critical to the state in our application for Race to the Top funds and to those school districts that are applying for other ARRA competitive grants.

Commissioner's Letter to Students on NECAP Testing

I have written a letter to all students, encouraging them to perform well on the NECAP tests that began this week. I have asked all principals to distribute this letter. It is posted here: http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/DOCUMENTS/2009/2009_09_30_NECAP_Testing_Letter_to_Students.pdf

Statewide Transportation System Update

On August 24th, the statewide student out-of-district transportation system began service for the school year, eventually transporting a total of 1,987 students to 110 schools. Of these, 322 students are students with disabilities attending 53 different schools. The remaining students attend private, charter, or parochial schools or career-technical high schools.

Overall, superintendents and business managers are pleased with the system and are thankful to be relieved of some of the transportation-related phone calls and the follow-up typically associated with this type of transportation system.

RIDE is satisfied with the results during the start-up period, particularly in view of the complexity of melding 14 school districts and 110 nonpublic-school transportation needs into a single transportation system. (Initially, Phase I was to begin with only six districts, but the remaining districts petitioned RIDE to join the system early.) We are working with a couple of communities to address some outstanding out-of-district transportation issues. RIDE and TransPar, the systems manager, are working closely with First Student, parents, the school districts, and the nonpublic schools to resolve these issues quickly and equitably.

Our most recent cost projections indicate that, as predicted, the statewide system is generating significant savings (\$1.4 million, or 25% of the out-of-district transportation costs for the participating districts) for transportation of students with disabilities. At this point, however, costs continue to be a concern regarding transportation of students to nonpublic schools. We are comparing the reliability of the original benchmark costs that the districts provided us two years ago with the current level of service that we are providing today. Where necessary, RIDE is prepared to provide transportation audits to help districts determine their previous costs.

In addition, RIDE is working with the participating districts, including Cranston, to investigate creative options to reduce the cost of the statewide system. Among the options we are considering are using excess capacity of the districts' in-district buses, using public transportation, and returning the nonpublic transportation to the districts, at their option.

We expect to send out September invoices for the statewide system within the next week. RIDE has initiated a new billing model, which will be transparent to district business managers. It will allow them not only to see their actual cost for each route but also to see the cost for each child on that route. As requests for changes in service come in, business managers will be able to readily determine the corresponding costs associated with that change.

Although we are satisfied with the overall success of the system at this point, this is still a work in progress and all parties are committed to providing the highest quality and safest school transportation possible.

You can send questions or comments to TransPar, at (401) 222-5024, or at transinfo@ride.ri.gov.

Algebra I and Algebra II Assessments

The Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Accountability will send the following letter to all middle-school and high-school principals, requiring their response:

We are preparing for the next administration of the Algebra I & II End-Of-Course Assessments. These assessments were developed by a consortium of 14 states under the facilitation of Achieve, Inc. Rhode Island was one of the nine lead states that participated in the development of these assessments. All Middle and High Schools are invited to participate in this year's assessments which are scheduled for May 17-June 2, 2010. As in past years, the Rhode Island Department of Education is supporting the cost of this assessment. Each participating district office will be issued a financial grant which will equal the amount of the invoice to be received from Pearson Educational Measurement; the contractor for these assessments.

For planning purposes, we are asking you to indicate whether you will be participating in Algebra I or Algebra II assessment and how many students in each grade will be assessed. In the near future, Pearson will be instituting a rapid reporting program in which results will be returned to schools within 7 or 14 calendar days after receipt of complete state test materials.

This is at additional cost which the state will bear. We would like to know whether you find this useful.

Please complete the attached form and return it to Van A. Yidana (222-8488) who will provide support on administrative issues. In addition to Van, Patricia Carnevale (222-8458) will provide support on Algebra content issues.

For those districts which participated in these assessments in the past, we thank you for your support and interest in the project and hope you continue to participate. For others who did not participate last year, this is an opportunity to sign up and gauge the effectiveness of your Algebra program.

Professional-Development Opportunity Regarding RtI for English-Language Learners

The Office for Diverse Learners will send this notice to ELL directors, curriculum directors, and others in the field:

SAVE THE DATE!

**RtI FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: SEPARATING DIFFERENCE
FROM DISABILITY**

The R.I. Department of Education, in conjunction with the Northern Rhode Island Collaborative, is pleased to offer a professional development opportunity presented by Dr. Catherine Collier for RtI Coordinators and team members, ELL Directors/Coordinators, Reading Teachers, Literary Specialists, and personnel supporting EIS activities, such as behavior or math interventionists in the districts.

WHEN: Thursday, November 19th -- 9:00 AM TO 3:00 PM
Friday, November 20th -- 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM
WHERE: Northern RI Collaborative
PD Training Center, Rm. 104
640 George Washington Highway
Lincoln, RI 02865

Details on how to register for this session will follow soon.

Workshops on NECAP science results

The Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Accountability will send the following letter to all principals, regarding workshops on NECAP science results:

Upon the release of NECAP Science results, RIDE would like to provide your teachers with an opportunity to interpret the data in a meaningful way. We plan to look at data from a state, district and classroom perspective and will also be presenting new strategies for using released items. Our goal is for teachers to be able to use data and the released items to improve their classroom decision making. Dates for the teacher workshops are below:

Worksh op	Element ary School	Middle School	High School	Location
Teacher I	Novemb er 2, 2009 3:30- 5:30 pm	Novemb er 3, 2009	Novemb er 4, 2009	Northern RI Collaborat ive
Teacher II	Novemb er 9, 2009 3:30- 5:30 pm	Novemb er 23, 2009	Novemb er 24, 2009	Southern RI Collaborat ive

We encourage teachers to come in school level teams of at least two or three. If registered in that manner, RIDE can provide school data at the workshop. We also ask for planning purposes teachers attend sessions for their grade level.

Registration is available online at:

<http://iregister.measuredprogress.org/>. Please choose the *New England Common Assessment Program* option from the drop-down menu.

Thank you in advance for your help promoting this professional development opportunity.

From ED:

Information on FERPA and student privacy rights

I have received this communication from the Family Policy Compliance Office regarding FERPA and student privacy rights, and I am providing it to you for your information:

Dear Chief State School Officer:

Please find below the hyperlink to our annual notice to the SEA of its responsibilities under the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) and the *Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment* (PPRA). Also included are links to the letter and enclosures addressed to local superintendents. We would appreciate your sharing these links with each school district superintendent in your State and hope that you will find this information helpful as you strive to protect parents and students privacy rights under FERPA and PPRA.

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpcoco/doc/chiefsea.doc>

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpcoco/doc/pprasuper.doc>

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpcoco/doc/ferparights.doc>

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/doc/ppraconsent.doc>

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/doc/ppranotice.doc>

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/doc/directoryinfo.doc>

Should you or your staff have any questions about the requirements of these laws after reading the attached information, you may call our office at 202-260-3887 or email us at FERPA@ed.gov.

Paul Gammill
Director
Family Policy Compliance Office